

7/27/71

ELLSBERG BOOK

TYPE SPECIFICATIONS · ELLSBERG BOOK

- TEXT:** 10/11 Times Roman x 20 picas - 37 lines + runninghead and drop folio to a full text page. 20 li. on chapter opening pg.
- RUNNINGHEAD** 10/16 T.R. Small Caps, <sup>letter</sup> # 1 pt., center  
~~Part~~ title left, Part title right
- DROP FOLIO:** *DANIEL ELLSBERG*  
9 pt. T. R. centered; 6 pts. below last line of text
- PART TITLES:** New right, backed blank. Sink 6 picas. 30 pt. Bulmer Caps indented from left 1 pica. 9 pts. visual # between lines. Break as marked in Ms.
- CHAPTER OPENINGS:** Opening paragraph flush left; all others, 1 em indent. First chapter after each P/T opens new right, thereafter, new right or left.
- EXTRACT:** 9/10 T.R., 2 em indent on left, 1/2 li.# above and below.
- FOOTNOTE:** 8/9 T.R. set full measure. No para. indent. *are set*
- HEADS:**
- (A.) Chapter titles, 18/24 Bulmer U & lc flush left. Sink 1-1/2 picas. (*break as marked in ms.*)
  - (B.) 10/11 T.R. Bold Ulc x 18 picas flush left, ragged right, no broken words. 1-1/2 li.# above, 1/2 li.# below. *are set*
  - (C.) 10/11 T.R. ital Ulc x 18 picas, flush left, ragged right, no broken words. 1-1/2 li.# above, 1/2 li.# below
- NOTE:** Minimum of 2 lines of text under (B.) or (C) head. If impossible, end pg. short and start head on new page with 1-1/2 li.# sinkage.

A7878

P/T ①

Preamble (A)

PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON THE VIETNAM WAR



# The Content of Dissent

22

date

Notes written in response to a request for personal commentary for the attention of Senator Eugene McCarthy. With an earlier section on Nixon's strategy—omitted here but reflected in the Introduction—this draft was circulated to various Congressional staffs.

see p. 15

~~What should be the content of dissent to the war now?~~  
~~What is wrong with the Administration's program? . . .~~

(1) This policy proposes, almost guarantees, a great many more American deaths, and a great deal of killing of Vietnamese, military and civilians, by American <sup>forces</sup> combat units. This is especially so, if the policy goads the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong into costly offensives against U.S. and GVN forces, as it is likely to do (more likely than are alternative policies which would commit us publicly to total and reasonably prompt withdrawal).

~~also~~  
air force?

But even without dramatic offensives, total <sup>casualties</sup> U.S. deaths over the next two years are almost sure to be large, and Vietnamese <sup>ones</sup> deaths much larger still. And even if U.S. combat deaths should be low after that, Vietnamese deaths in combat prolonged by our support—and caused, on the other side, largely by our continued bombing—would not be.

(2) No adequate purpose is served by these addi-

I change  
"deaths" to  
"casualties"  
because it is more  
idiomatic + also  
includes a wider  
range of war victims

\* If we had adequate resources, we could win the war because of our policy  
cont



tional deaths. The most likely outcome, increasingly so as the war goes on, is that <sup>they</sup> ~~these additional~~ deaths will have served no purpose whatever. They will have merely postponed an ultimate outcome described simply: *the Americans leave, the communists dominate South Vietnam.*

But suppose that the best outcome envisioned by the plan <sup>does occur</sup> ~~comes about~~, so that with <sup>then</sup> ~~the~~ continued presence of 30,000 U.S. troops and air support, and indefinitely prolonged bombing, <sup>preserves</sup> ~~a~~ narrow-based, self-serving military dictatorship, with or without a <sup>carefully</sup> ~~carefully~~ screened and impotent <sup>democratic</sup> ~~parliamentary~~ façade, <sup>which</sup> ~~persists~~ in extending police controls over a majority of the citizens of South Vietnam. Neither would *this* result come anywhere near justifying the deaths suffered or inflicted by U.S. <sup>force</sup> ~~combat participation~~ in this war for two more years, or one more year.

After all, how many lives—American or Vietnamese—does the *Administration* think would be justifiably expended to achieve this result? How many do they believe would die? How sure are they of this last estimate: how sure it would not be twice as much, or more? How many lives are they prepared to gamble on these estimates? And how many more Tet “victories,” how many My Lai’s would it be acceptable to experience? . . .

Indeed, it is simply an unjustifiable abuse of the Vietnamese people to cooperate in imposing such a regime upon them (even without a war); and it is an abuse of *ourselves*, of our sense of values and purpose, of the ideals and the sacrificed lives of our youth, to pretend otherwise, to deceive ourselves further.

(3) Those who believe that Nixon is leading us—our troops and our bombers—out of Vietnam either rapidly or altogether, are deceived. Those who knowingly accept his <sup>plan for</sup> ~~leadership toward~~ a continued combat presence and involvement are being led in a wrong

specious?  
rigged  
elections etc?

rigged



direction; and the longer the President is allowed to set this course without protest, the harder it will be for him, or anyone, to change it later.

*Indefinitely?*  
If the policy succeeds to the limit of his reasonable hopes, it means that we stay in Vietnam "forever," supporting an ongoing war with money, bombs, and napalm. It means we would have reversed the policy errors of 1965 onwards (bombing the North, open-ended commitment of U.S. ground troops) only to return to the policy errors of 1961-64, more efficiently carried out. Continued involvement would still carry the seeds of future re-escalation, <sup>from</sup> ~~with~~ the commitment of personal, party, and national prestige; <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ declaration of vital interest; <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ bureaucratic incentives to give over-optimistic estimates of the prospects of "victory"; and <sup>the</sup> pressures on the other side to raise the bid.

But even if the level of U.S. casualties remained low—indeed, even if Vietnamese casualties finally became low, as violence subsided—the results achieved would not justify even the subsequent, ongoing costs, in moral and psychological terms as well as material and human, of a prolonged occupation of South Vietnam by U.S. support troops, U.S.-paid mercenaries, and a U.S.-financed, dictatorial regime.

(4) It is simply untrue, now as in the past—a conscious deceit—that it has been the goal of our government to promote "free choice, self-determination" by the people of Vietnam, North or South. Since at least 1949 (the "fall of China") successive American administrations have seen it as strongly contrary to our interests that a Vietnamese government (or after 1954, a South Vietnamese government) should contain any communists in significant roles, believing that, as in post-war Czechoslovakia and unlike France or Italy, this would be bound to lead to communist take-over, an outcome "unacceptable" to us.

The real issue is not whether a large majority of the



South Vietnamese would have voted for Ho Chi Minh in a free election in 1954, as President Eisenhower and our National Intelligence Estimates believed; or even whether they would currently win the high proportion of Assembly seats that the well-organized Catholics have achieved with less than 10 percent of the population. What is clear is that each government we have backed in South Vietnam has lacked, by our own estimates, the support of a majority of the people of the country, and has indeed enjoyed the willing support of factions no larger altogether than the communist-led minority which was being excluded totally from open political participation.

Each of these governments has been totally dependent upon foreign aid, <sup>partly</sup> ~~in part~~ because we made it so freely available, but primarily because it has lacked the political support and the self-assurance to tax its own people sufficiently to meet its internal needs. Indeed, such urban support as they have enjoyed has to a large extent been bought by our willingness to maintain an artificially high standard of living through commodity imports. Likewise, the most important internal pillar of these governments, the army, has been bought for them by almost total U.S. underwriting of the military budget.

<sup>Public and</sup> The ~~current~~ result is a basically military regime whose rationale for leadership and whose (largely corrupt) income derive <sup>mainly</sup> from the war and would almost surely <sup>end</sup> ~~be ended~~ with the ending of the war and of American support. This loss of income and status <sup>by</sup> ~~for~~ the military leadership would result not only if the war ended with a communist victory but even if it ended with a total defeat of the communists, if that should end the urgency of American pressures and support for a strictly anti-communist regime. Thus, the interests of the Thieu/Ky Government are served *only* by a continuation of a war with American support.

But wouldn't a  
successful  
dictatorship be  
able to prolong  
itself in Vietnam?  
NO, not  
this one!



If support of such a government serves any American interests, there are three, at least, that it cannot serve at all: the need <sup>legally</sup> to justify our presence and intervention in Vietnam; our desire to believe that our efforts support the interests and desires of the Vietnamese people; the need to see the war ended. To say that the terms of our departure are dependent upon the will of this government is to say no more than that we have chosen to stay forever. To take the will of this government as evidence and expression of the will of the mass of the Vietnamese people that the war and our combat participation in it should continue, is to deceive the American public.

It is, indeed, not for us to choose <sup>its</sup> ~~the~~ form of government for the Vietnamese people. But it is time to end the deception that we have not made that choice for them, when we support with our armed presence and vast material aid a government that is, on the one hand, totally dependent on that support, and on the other hand, which suppresses all opposition and freedom of expression.

The members of a regime that forbids freedom of speech, press, and political representation bearing upon the most vital question of society, war, or peace, may find their own reasons for doing so, but we cannot justify continuing our support of them, financial or otherwise. We should make this clear; and, if there is no <sup>improvement</sup> ~~change~~ in the practices of the regime and <sup>in</sup> the freedoms enjoyed by the public, <sup>(we should)</sup> totally end our support.

There are no doubt, other regimes in the world that ~~so~~ <sup>are as authoritarian</sup> ~~restrict freedom~~ yet enjoy our aid.<sup>1</sup> Our policies ~~may~~ <sup>will (?)</sup> need questioning there too, but at least they do not impose on us the moral burden of prolonging, as a direct

<sup>In the summer of 1971,</sup>  
<sup>has recently completed a</sup>  
<sup>As this goes to press,</sup> Vice President Agnew ~~is in the midst~~  
 of a grand tour of such "Free World" friends: Saudi Arabia,  
 Ethiopia, Spain, Portugal, Morocco . . .

one and  
 two seem  
 almost identical

indefinitely (?)



consequence of our aid, a bloody, devastating, unwanted war.

(5) The most intense political interest of most <sup>South</sup> Vietnamese at this time is not for the rule of one personality or party over another, but for peace. That is a desire that receives neither expression nor representation—thus one that is hard to “prove”—in a state where (in the South, as in the North) freedom of speech and political activity on this very subject are forbidden, and candidates who might voice this desire cannot run for office, indeed, face prison. Yet is there a knowledgeable official of our government, is there an authority with first-hand experience of <sup>South</sup> Vietnamese society and politics, who does not believe that a majority of the <sup>South</sup> Vietnamese people would, in a free choice, prefer peace under either of the opposing governments to a continuation of this war?

On the contrary, knowledgeable people who yet support Administration policy find, rather, reasons why our intervention is “necessary” *despite* the fact that it means imposing a regime and a war upon the mass of the Vietnamese people against their desires. But the reasons are inadequate; the “necessity” is spurious, an illusion or a lie; and the policy that denies the import of these Vietnamese desires is ultimately dishonorable.

For twenty years, we have presented our involvement in Vietnam to ourselves in terms of altruism, generosity, common aims with the Vietnamese people. We have thought of safeguarding our own interests by way of safeguarding those of the Vietnamese, offering them a freer and better life than they could hope for under communist domination. Our “goals” for the Vietnamese people have not been unworthy, but they have amounted to fantasies hiding the reality of what it was we were constructing as a fortress against communism—an alternative dictatorship, a succession of governments that have earned the hatred and opposition of many of the

*Don, I wonder if this is equally true of the N. Vietnamese. Don't most observers find that civilian morale is high there? Also their extraordinary performance would seem to indicate that their reasons for fighting are very strong.*

*“Devil”?*



most patriotic and talented Vietnamese, the contempt of most of the rest, regimes that could not attract the loyalty and support of most Vietnamese even as an alternative to communist rule. And the same fantasies hid from us the horrors being committed daily by us and by those we have upheld.

Our efforts supposedly in the interests of the Vietnamese have, in fact, delivered them to governments they can <sup>at best</sup> just barely prefer to communism, and to an endless, devastating war. It is time at last to deliver them from our help; from our involvement; from our concern. We can help them, at last, only by leaving them alone. *by now?*

As for our efforts to serve our own interests in Vietnam, these also have failed: for it is no success, nor evidence of our wisdom, human values, and fitness for leadership, to have postponed communist rule so long at the human and material costs we have imposed on the Vietnamese and ourselves. Nor can this failure be redeemed by imposing new costs, new horrors, let alone by the new failures that are most likely if we continue. Nor could it be redeemed, or past costs justified, even by the kind of "success" described above, the best we can realistically hope to achieve.

If the regime we have supported should be supplanted by communist rule after we withdraw the props of U.S. arms and taxes, that change in itself would be—for the mass of the Vietnamese people—no tragedy comparable to the prolongation of the war: though the victims under the two regimes would differ (and we have an obligation to provide sanctuary for those we have most compromised).

Such an outcome could, no doubt, lead to harsh recriminations within our own country—<sup>especially</sup> among those who overestimate the advantages offered by the regimes we have imposed upon the Vietnamese compared to communist rule, and who <sup>estimate</sup> ~~underrate~~ both

Dan, you  
might want to  
quote Chi on  
this point!  
"Working Notes"  
of pp. 19-22.



PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON THE VIETNAM WAR 29

the burdens of continued war upon the Vietnamese and their desire for peace. But in any case, ~~among~~ <sup>Americans</sup> many of our citizens there would be ~~pain at seeing the failure~~ <sup>of</sup> of American efforts, dramatized so starkly. The threat not only of dissension but of a resurgence of McCarthyism would be a very serious ~~political problem with which this country might have to deal.~~ <sup>one</sup>

Yet it would <sup>is</sup> ~~be~~ wrong, morally wrong, to think of postponing or ~~dealing with~~ <sup>neutralizing</sup> that problem now by prolonging the human costs of this war.

angered or dismayed  
by this

Dan, I wonder  
if you want to  
refer to Kissinger  
on this point.



Murder in Laos: The Reason Why

As though driven by Che's curse, Richard Nixon seems compelled to create "two, three... many Vietnams" in Southeast Asia.

The pace of invasion is quickening. On the first evening of the invasion of Laos, Vice President Ky pointed to what could be the next. South Vietnamese ground forces, he said, might have to cross the 17th parallel into North Vietnam to hit supply bases above the DMZ. It was six years since South Vietnamese forces had first done that, in the air, with Ky himself leading the attack. In fact, Ky was speaking at a dinner marking the anniversary, largely unnoticed in the US, of those raids of February 7 and 8, 1965, which "retaliated" for the death of eight Americans in an NLF attack on Pleiku and led to a three-year bombing campaign against the North. Ky's warning, coinciding with the new offensive in Laos, linked the past, present, and future of a fundamentally unchanging US strategy in Indochina.

In the US itself, not even the Orwellian communiqués seem to have altered. On February 7, 1965, the White House chose the occasion of its announcement that US bombers were crossing the borders of North Vietnam to repeat its past assurances to the American public: "As the US Government has frequently stated, we seek no wider war." On February 9, 1971, as US bombers and helicopters were for the first time accompanying South Vietnamese forces—paid, equipped, and supported by the US—into Laos, Secretary Laird told the nation: "We have not widened the war." He added: "To the contrary, we have shortened it."

To the contrary—as all can see—we have widened it. Why? When and why will we do it again? There is, in truth, a coherent inner logic to the policy that contains answers to these questions. It is a logic that has pointed for at least the last year to the invasion of Laos—and beyond.

For twenty years—since the "fall of China" and the rise of McCarthy—Rule 1 of Indochina policy for an American President has been: Do not lose the rest of Vietnam to communism before the next election. But there was also Rule 2, learned shortly thereafter, in Korea: Do not fight a land war in Asia with US ground combat troops either. Three Presidents, starting with Truman, managed to satisfy both constraints during their terms and passed the challenge on to their successors. The problem grew, and Lyndon Johnson's

Presidency was crushed in its first full term by the impossibility of fulfilling both requirements. But Johnson's foundering on Rule 2 did not repeal Rule 1 for his successor: even in 1969, even for a Republican, even for Richard Nixon.

Like Kennedy and Johnson before him, Richard Nixon believes he cannot hold the White House for a second term unless he holds Saigon through his first.

His two predecessors had seen the

leaders of the previous Democratic administration driven from office after they had been charged with having "lost China." More specifically, they were accused of losing China without trying, without making full use of US airpower or advisers, without giving full support to an anticommunist Asian ally: omissions pointing to weakness or treason. Kennedy and Johnson both feared that the accusation of "losing Vietnam"—or simply "losing a war"—could rally again the hounds of McCarthyism against their party.

Nixon does not feel immune just because he once was one of the leaders of that pack. On the contrary, he knows better than anyone else just

what he would try to do with such an issue if he were on the outside seeking power, even against a Republican President. He is determined not to have to suffer from it in 1972, either from Reagan summoning away his supporters in the convention or from Wallace calling to his voters in the election. (Whether the fears shared by Nixon and his predecessors of a threat from the right are based on political reality, or on a specter of their own making, is not the issue here. What matters is that four of the last five Presidents have felt compelled to take

such a threat seriously and Nixon still does.)

No doubt there are other and perhaps even stronger motives that influence Mr. Nixon's choices, but they point in the same direction. There is good evidence that the President is, even more than his predecessors, a "true believer" in the cold war premises they all shared, including that of the importance of maintaining US power in Asia, showing strength to the Russians and Chinese, containing communism—monolithic or not—and avoiding the reverberating damage of a US failure or humiliation.

Which of these instincts is the stronger matters little in this case, for

they reinforce each other in Vietnam policy: Saigon must not "fall"... above all, not too soon or too suddenly. Those who imagine otherwise, who suppose that Nixon's views on domestic politics conflict with his notions of US interests abroad, and that his instincts for political survival inexorably urge him toward total withdrawal "no matter what," are almost surely wrong.



*my cup* *1 li #*  
*6-2*  
*my car*  
*1 li #*  
During 1968 Henry Kissinger frequently said in private talks that the appropriate goal of US policy was a "decent interval"—two to three years—between the withdrawal of US troops and a Communist takeover in Vietnam. In that year, an aim so modest had almost a radical ring; no major public figure, in fact, dared openly to endorse it. But in 1969, when Kissinger moved to the White House, his notion took on a sharper meaning and new urgency. It became not a goal but a requirement; and the "interval," it became evident, could not end before November, 1972. In its new, tougher form, the doctrine had practical implications for policy well beyond 1972. In effect, it meant acting immediately and over the next several years to achieve both an indefinite fighting stalemate in Vietnam and support for such a stalemate in the US. And that aim had implications for the prospects of renewed escalation of the air war in Indochina.

To begin with, it was evident in Paris by the spring of 1969 that Hanoi and the NLF would not accept terms that would meet the Administration's needs for assuring non-Communist control in Saigon through at least 1972. Nor would the Russians intervene to achieve this, as Nixon had hoped. So the war had to go on.

Total Vietnamization? US military advisers held out no hope whatever that Saigon could be held with any assurance for three years, or even one year, if no US military personnel remained in South Vietnam. No foreseeable improvement in ARVN, or amount of US aid, including air support, would prop up Saigon reliably in the face of North Vietnamese forces if all our troops went home. Both US troops and airpower were needed, in sizable amounts, for years, perhaps indefinitely.

In fact, through 1969 and, so far as is known, today, the highest military leaders have never judged officially that the job of holding Saigon could be done, with reasonable assurance and with adequate safety for remaining US troops, with fewer than 200,000 military personnel in the country to provide air support, logistics, communications, intelligence, self-defense, and

strategic reserve. That figure, Nixon probably thinks, and with reason, is inflated; but there are limits to what the Joint Chiefs of Staff will certify as "militarily acceptable," and the semi-permanent minimum may well turn out to be not much lower than 100,000 for the end of 1972 and after. It is more likely to prove higher; and it will almost certainly not be less than half that figure, long after 1972.

With the military floor somewhere between 50 and 150,000 troops, the political ceiling is surely not very much higher. LBJ's strategy, putting half a million US troops in the South, met the goal he defined in his first week in office; he left the White House five years later accused of many things, but not of being the first President to lose a war. Yet his approach was, obviously, only a partial success; it saved Saigon but lost the White House. As would anyone determined to hold both, Nixon drew an immediate lesson: US troop levels and budget costs must go down, and casualties, draft calls, and news space must go down even more sharply. In fact, even 50,000 troops—still twice as many as LBJ had in Vietnam at the onset of the bombing—could be acceptable to the public or, better, ignored by it, only if US casualties were very low indeed and newsworthy North Vietnamese successes anywhere in Indochina almost nonexistent.

Thus Nixon's practical goal—a "Korean solution," as officials began to call it—became clear: to make Indochina safe for an indefinite presence of 50,000 US troops or more in South Vietnam. The key to a solution, Nixon and Kissinger concluded, was to expand the role of airpower, and in particular, to restore and increase the threat of bombing the North.

How else, they reasoned, could Nixon ever compel successful negotiations? How could he induce the Russians to use their leverage for a settlement, unless the Russians were made to fear—in Laos, say, or in Haiphong—that they would become more directly involved?

How else could Nixon deter the North Vietnamese forces, once they recovered from the 1968 losses, from making embarrassing gains at will in Laos; or worse, from coming south to overpower ARVN; or worst of all, attacking the reduced US units, either destroying them or forcing them home?

"Vietnamization," if confined to the borders of South Vietnam and with the threat of escalation excluded, had no persuasive long-run answer to these threats. That, in the minds of some in Washington, in view of the unpromising prospects in Paris, was an argument for total, prompt US extrication from Vietnam. To Nixon and Kissinger, it meant instead that a credible bombing threat was essential to their program.



L3

The policy they decided on was in many ways a familiar one, especially for Republicans. Its main ingredients were precisely those prescribed twenty years ago by the "Asia-first" right-wing Republicans in Congress for preventing the "fall of China" and, later, by MacArthur and others, for winning "victory" in Korea—the threat and, if necessary, use of US strategic airpower and allied Asian troops under a US-approved, authoritarian, and anti-communist regime, financed and equipped by the US and using American advisers and logistical and air

support. (Vice President Nixon had been willing to add some US ground combat troops to that package to save North Vietnam in 1954, before the fall of Dienbienphu, but this was considered an aberration at the time.)

If one adds the threat of nuclear weapons—a threat used privately, Nixon believes, by Eisenhower to settle the Korean War, and later used publicly by Secretary Dulles to influence the First Indochina War—one has all the elements underlying Dulles's doctrine of "massive retaliation" and the "New Look" defense posture of the Eisenhower Administration. This was the policy that enabled Republicans to combine aggressive rhetoric with a limited defense budget throughout the years when Nixon was Vice President. As an academic strategist during that

period, Henry Kissinger dissented from this formula mainly by stressing the role of "tactical" nuclear weapons (in the book, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, which made his reputation). But in Nixon's Administration, the threat of nuclear weapons in Indochina is not—as yet, at least—an essential part of the strategy of Kissinger and Nixon (except, as usual, to deter Chinese intervention)—though they have pointedly refused explicitly to foreclose their use. The new strategy differs from the old mainly in relying on the strategic threat of non-nuclear bombing.

But how could Nixon and Kissinger believe, after the experience of the Sixties, that threats of massive bombing could solve their problems in Indochina? What could new threats promise now, when the practice of sustained bombing under Johnson had in fact failed to deter or physically to prevent even the Têt offensive?

Nixon's answer was that the Democrats had moved too gradually and too predictably, and had never threatened or used *heavy enough* bombing. This is what the Joint Chiefs had been saying all along, though Nixon had no need to take instruction from them. He was using a language he shares with the generals when he explained after the Cambodian invasion that, whereas Johnson had moved "step by step,"

This action is a decisive move, and this action also puts the enemy on warning that if it escalates while we are trying to deescalate, we will move decisively and not step by step.

these analysts

What he was then threatening, as he had done before the election, was "decisive" bombing of targets long proposed by some US military chiefs and their political spokesmen: Hanoi, "military targets" in Hanoi and unrestrictedly throughout the North, the dikes, the communications with China.<sup>1</sup>

Second, Nixon believed the threat would be newly credible and effective because he would demonstrate to Hanoi that it could be carried out without destroying his own political base or ability to govern the US. Johnson had lost these, in Nixon's view, because he had combined inadequate air attacks with excessive numbers of ground troops, US casualties, and draft calls. Once those numbers were diminished, Nixon believed, the American public and its representa-

tives in Congress would accept even a semi-permanent and geographically extended war, financed by America but with direct American combat action limited primarily to airpower.

That was a bold judgment to make in 1969. Yet the North Vietnamese had to be forced to accept this judgment if Nixon's threat of bombing were to deter them from challenging a protracted American presence, or bring them, ultimately, to accept his terms for a "just peace." Only convincing demonstrations of his willingness and ability to escalate could bring that about.

The notion of "warning demonstrations" has thus been central to the tactics of Nixon and Kissinger, and it

<sup>1</sup> See Les Gelb and Morton H. Halperin, "Only a Timetable Can Extricate Nixon," *Washington Post Outlook* section, May 24, 1970; and Halperin, "Vietnam: Options," *New York Times*, Op-Ed page, November 7, 1970. The press has oddly failed to take account of these two remarkable "inside" pieces on White House threats and intentions, warning of further escalation by Nixon; or to explore the views of these two analysts, each of whom served both Johnson and Nixon in highly sensitive positions dealing with Vietnam policy, Halperin having served until September, 1969, as assistant to Henry Kissinger in the White House.

This discussion owes a great deal to the thinking of these former colleagues, Halperin in particular—though they are in no way responsible for any of the interpretations presented here—as it does to a number of others with comparable governmental experience who cannot be named.

52  
53



explains the sequence of political threats and offensive actions they have taken over the last two years. As early as the spring of 1969, our first air attacks on Cambodia—not officially announced and little noticed in the US—were soon followed by a warning to Hanoi which was inserted in an otherwise moderate speech by Nixon on a Vietnam settlement.

At the same time the bombing expanded in Laos, and a series of bombing raids began on North Vietnam. As these raids continued, Administration officials gradually dismantled Johnson's 1968 "understanding" which had strictly limited the justification for such raids. Finally, in his televised interview with the press on January 5, 1971, the President virtually abandoned this "understanding."<sup>2</sup>

The ground invasion of Cambodia took place in spring, 1970; in the fall, troops landed in North Vietnam; now we are supporting an invasion of Laos. In each case the White House has conveyed unmistakable warnings to Hanoi that more such action was to come.

All of these actions could be, and were, defended as tactics necessary to delay enemy build-ups or "spoil" enemy offensives. Indeed, all of them may keep things quieter in South Vietnam, in the short run. They make offensive action difficult and costly for the North Vietnamese, thus delaying a new offensive until Hanoi once again faces the inescapable need to make the necessary sacrifices. They do, in short, buy time, with US airpower and thousands of Asian lives. The airpower, especially the lavish use of armed helicopters, substitutes for US troops. The fewer American troops in Vietnam, the more need for US airpower throughout Indochina, if US losses are to be cut and the North Vietnamese prevented from taking the initiative.

Of course this view can be challenged on tactical grounds as well. By expanding the war, the US commanders are multiplying their risks and committing themselves to protracted war in three countries, for only limited gains. In Laos, for example, US helicopter losses and South Vietnamese casualties may turn out to be sizable. A right-wing coup may follow our interventions—reversing the order of events in Cambodia—with complex repercussions, possibly including an increased Chinese combat presence, which would automatically cause US nuclear contingency plans to be presented for consideration to the Secretary of Defense, if not to the President. And the North Vietnamese have considerable ability, as in Cambodia, to respond to our moves in the border areas by enlarging their control elsewhere.

But, as the White House planners see it, none of this tactical argument really matters. The domestic risks, in their view, are not great ones, even in the worst circumstances. After an unpopular beginning, the operation in Cam-

<sup>2</sup>Nixon claimed that the North Vietnamese had violated another understanding that our "unarmed reconnaissance planes could fly over North Vietnam with impunity," although former high officials in the Johnson Administration have denied that there was any such understanding. Nixon went on to state that "if they say there is no understanding in that respect"—as Hanoi leaders do say—"then there are no restraints whatever on us."

bodia showed to Nixon's satisfaction that the war can be reduced in visibility while expanding geographically, so long as US ground units are not involved.

In fact, tactical success is not what these initiatives are all about. Their real significance, in every case, is that they are concrete warnings to the Hanoi leadership, and to their Soviet and Chinese allies—violent warnings to back up verbal threats.

They warn, first, of what Nixon is willing to do and feels free to do without consulting Congress or feeling limited by Johnson's precedent. Each one of the measures listed above broke a restraint maintained or eventually imposed by Lyndon Johnson in his campaign to bring "pressures on Hanoi." There were, after all, some good reasons for observing those limitations, and many of those reasons are still plausible. Nixon's actions thus serve all the more forcefully as deliberate signals to his opponents that he will not be bound by earlier constraints.

His actions demonstrate, furthermore, how far Nixon thinks he can go by using the rationale of "protecting the lives of American troops" and the formula of "limited-duration interdiction operations, to permit continuation of the withdrawal of US forces." These terms—Hanoi is meant to notice—could be used just as well for the "limited" ground invasion of North Vietnam to destroy depots and bases above the DMZ that has been mentioned by General Ky. The same language could be used to justify the mining and aerial destruction of the port of Haiphong; or full-scale attacks on the land and water links to China and on "military targets" throughout the North including Hanoi. All of these could be described as "limited in time and space."

In fact, each one of these moves could be presented as a logical progression in a series of "interdictions" running from south to north, just as the present attacks in Laos "logically" followed the closing of the port of Sihanoukville by the Lon Nol government and the invasion of Cambodia. Each step could be explained as "closing" a remaining door in the channel of war materiel to North Vietnamese and NLF forces in South Vietnam.

To be sure, none of these steps could reliably close off that necessary trickle of supplies from the North, even if they were all taken together. But Nixon has been told this; again, that is not what such threatened moves are about. They point, rather, toward the program that the US Joint Chiefs of Staff have urged over the last decade in the absence of a permanent and "acceptable" settlement by Hanoi: the final destruction of "the will and capability of North Vietnam to wage war." Or to survive.

Not that Nixon hopes or expects this ultimate escalation will be necessary; his threats and commitments make it contingent on North Vietnamese behavior. Hanoi's leadership is left two options for avoiding this punishment. It can, tacitly but permanently, accept things pretty much as they are in the South, without initiating heavy combat, or with no more than can be handily contained by South Vietnamese ground forces with US air support. The war would continue but military action would taper off and US casualties would virtually cease. Or else, bowing to the con-



K-5

L-5

clusion that the American people will support a low-level or airpower war indefinitely, and that the American President will meet any attempt to convert it to a high-cost war by burning North Vietnam to the ground, the Hanoi leaders can seek to conclude a formal settlement on US terms.

US officers choose to call the first possibility a "Korean solution"—though it could mean permanent war and permanent US air operations—because it combines a permanent US presence with very low US casualties. The second possibility, which defines Nixon's aim of "winning a just peace," would more truly be a "Korean solution," especially in view of Nixon's conviction that settlement in Korea was based on the threat of massive bombings. Faith in either possibility permits Nixon to deny charges that he has chosen a "no-win" strategy.

So Che's prescription, finally, is turned around to Nixon's ends. Not only did the short-run problem of lowering US casualties during a gradual and limited reduction of strength—the problem of "getting through '72"—invite a broadening of the battleground to include the border bases and supply routes in Laos and Cambodia. Far more important, the symbolism of such widening—the dramatic crossing of frontiers in defiance of domestic protest and contrary expectations—was uniquely suited to making credible Nixon's crucial threat: to extend the battleground to all of North Vietnam. From the moment that Sihanouk's ouster cleared the way, it was almost inevitable that the search for a second "Korea" would lead the President to institute a second and a third "Vietnam"—to warn the North he could create a fourth.

In Laos the Administration is showing that it has learned its "lessons from Cambodia." No American rifle units in action, crossing borders or shooting white college students. No promises, no bulletins, no news at all, in fact. No statement on the operation by the President. Instead, on the afternoon of the day the helicopters and amtracs moved across the border, Nixon went before the TV cameras with a brief message on ecology, beginning (according to the White House press release):

In his Tragedy, *Murder in the Cathedral*, T. S. Elliott [sic] wrote, "Clean the air. Clean the sky. Wash the wind." [sic]

I have proposed to the Congress a sweeping and comprehensive program to do just that, and more—to end the plunder of America's natural heritage.

1. li #

1/2

art  
9/10

MP

1/2



L-6

No TV or news photos of the invasion were permitted; cameramen were barred from recording what we and our allies were doing to the natural heritage of their neighbors. (The Vietnamese were struck, a *New York Times* account reported, by the lushness of the yet undefoliated jungle they were entering.) Instead viewers were offered pictures of the moon and of the staging areas at Khe Sanh: an uncanny juxtaposition, the war-created moonscapes near the DMZ compensating for the lack of live coverage of the lunarization of Laos.

What will this new invasion mean to the people of Laos? War is not new to them, nor are foreign soldiers or American bombers; yet they are now feeling the impact of all these in a new and terrible way. As in Cambodia, the first operations are in relatively unpopulated areas; and as in Cambodia, the North Vietnamese forces will most likely fight back in more heavily populated lowlands and against towns, where our bombers and armed helicopters will seek them out. Then the refugees will come—many of them from areas where they have lived for years in the vicinity of Pathet Lao or North Vietnamese troops—to the fetid enclosures on the outskirts of towns that are not being bombed, leaving their dead behind them.

"We have learned one thing in Laos and Cambodia," the counsel for the Kennedy Subcommittee points out. "The mere presence of enemy forces does not lead to refugees. Heavy battles do; US bombing does."

As an essential part of Nixon's "winding down the war" for American troops in South Vietnam, American pilots were sent to inflict the war more heavily on Laos and Cambodia. In the fall of 1969, more than 600 sorties a day were being flown over Laos; some of the heaviest months of bombing in the war occurred in that year, and again in 1970. The number of refugees in Laos had already risen sharply in 1968, after American bombers were shifted in late March from North Vietnamese targets to areas in both northern and southern Laos.

But in the first twelve months of the Nixon Administration, the number of refugees nearly doubled. The official estimate for the end of 1969—certainly a low one—was at least 240,000 (in a population of under three million). In the first eighteen months there were at least 30,000 civilian casualties, including more than 9,000 killed. The number of refugees continued to rise in 1970; by the fall it was almost three times the estimate for February, 1968.<sup>3</sup> Then in November of last year, US bombing escalated sharply in Laos.

Whatever the impact of recent events on the flight of people within Laos, it is likely soon to be magnified by the effects of operations similar to those in Cambodia, where well over a million refugees have been "generated" during the last nine months (in a population of about 6.7 million). There is no available estimate of the number of

<sup>3</sup> See the Kennedy Subcommittee Staff Report, "Refugee and Civilian War Casualty Problems in Indochina." (Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, September 28, 1970.) Also see Senator Kennedy's "sanitized" summary of two classified reports on war victims in Laos, re-

leased February 7, 1971.

See insert attached  
[Though reliable figures for Cambodia and Laos are not available—the U.S. Executive makes no attempt to obtain them—the Kennedy Subcommittee staff  
Moreover, the refugee rate within South Vietnam began to increase in late 1970, and rose to the highest level in two years for the second quarter of 1971.]

estimates that civilian war casualties and deaths throughout Indochina were higher in 1970 over 1969.

civilian deaths in Cambodia since last spring's invasion.

How many will die in Laos?

What is Richard Nixon's best estimate of the number of Laotian people—"enemy" and "non-enemy"—that US firepower will kill in the next twelve months?

He does not have an estimate. He has not asked Henry Kissinger for one, and Kissinger has not asked the Pentagon; and none of these officials has ever seen an answer, to this or any comparable question on the expected impact of war policy on human life. And none of them differs in this from his predecessors. (Systems analysts in the bureaucracy make estimates as best they can of factors judged pertinent to policy: "costs" or "benefits," "inputs" or "outputs." The deaths of "non-combatant people" have never been regarded by officials as being relevant to any of these categories.)

Officials would, however, have an answer of some sort if other parts of the government or the press or the public had ever demanded one. Were it not for the Kennedy Subcommittee there would be no over-all official calculations of past casualties in Vietnam—not even the underestimated figures that have been made available. But as a result of that questioning and the subcommittee's own surveys and analyses, we now know that at least 300,000 civilians have been killed in South Vietnam—mostly by US firepower—between 1965 and 1970, out of at least one million casualties. Of these, the subcommittee's calculations indicate that about 50,000 civilians were killed in Nixon's first year in office, about 35,000 in the first half of his second, and more than that in the second half. So the war is not "winding down" for the people of South Vietnam any more than for their neighbors; as would be apparent to the American public if such figures were flashed on the evening TV news along with US and "enemy" casualties.

But even the Kennedy Subcommittee has made no effort to calculate deaths and injuries from American bombing in North Vietnam; or to elicit estimates of future victims throughout Indochina. Nor have the press and television. Nor has there been any public demand for this information.

see attached insert



office, about 35,000 in his second.

[Though reliable figures for Cambodia and Laos are not available ~~the~~ the U.S. Executive makes no attempt to obtain them <sup>1</sup>/<sub>m2</sub> the Kennedy Subcommittee staff estimates that civilian war casualties and deaths throughout Indochina were higher in 1970 over 1969. Moreover, the refugee rate within South Vietnam began to increase in late 1970, and rose to the highest level in two years for the second quarter of 1971].)

So the war is not "winding down" for the people of South Vietnam any more than for their neighbors; as would be apparent to the American public if such figures were flashed on the evening TV news along with U.S. and "enemy" casualties.

But even the Kennedy Subcommittee has made no effort to calculate deaths and injuries from American bombing in North Vietnam; or to elicit estimates of future victims throughout Indochina. Nor have the press and television. Nor has there been any public demand for this information.

Insert for  
page L-6

Insert for  
p. L-6



It is against this background of two decades of American official and public ignorance about and indifference to our impact upon the people of Indochina that one must understand the ease with which the Nixon Administration has sold the slogan: "The war is trending down." To agree with that proposition—and it is scarcely questioned—is to define "the war" narrowly as "what is trending down": US ground troops, US casualties, budget costs. It is simply to ignore those aspects of the war that are "trending up": US air operations and ground fighting outside South Vietnam, and the resulting deaths and casualties we are sponsoring in Laos and Cambodia. But it cannot really be said that this narrowed perception is simply a hallucinatory trick played by the Nixon Administration on the public. Americans have always seen the Indochina war this way.

US military officers are sometimes

better at perceiving things clearly.)

"War is killing people," a RAND physicist was once instructed by General Curtis LeMay, one of history's "terrible simplifiers." "When you kill enough people, the other side quits."

But the new Administration is abandoning the previous crude strategy of ground combat "attrition," with its bloody-minded calculus of "body counts" and abstruse models of the birth rate of young "enemy males" to be killed in the future. Most of the victims that the new strategy kills as a result of its "warning demonstrations" have no place in bureaucratic calculations. The same is true of the vast numbers of North Vietnamese people who will be threatened if their leaders, continuing thirty years of armed struggle, decide to fight against a "Korean solution." The plans for air war de-

signed by General LeMay may then be carried out by the Nixon Administration.

Joseph Alsop, whose column noting the "cool courage" of the President in Laos had been distributed widely by the White House, wrote several days after the Laos invasion: "As of now, Richard M. Nixon is beginning to appear as one of our better war presidents."

The passage our war President chose to recall to the American people that Monday afternoon of the invasion does not have to do with air pollution, or with any ordinary defilement. It speaks of murder. It is a chorus of horror chanted as murder is being done, in full view, at the wishes of a ruler, for reasons of state.

Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take stone from stone and wash them.

The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood.

A rain of blood has blinded my eyes...

How how can I ever return, to the soft quiet seasons?

Night stay with us, stop sun, hold season, let the day not come, let the spring not come.

Can I look again at the day and its common things, and see them all smeared with blood, through a curtain of falling blood? ...

We did not wish anything to happen...

In life there is not time to grieve long.

But this, this is out of life, this is

out of time,  
An instant eternity of evil and wrong.

These lines are almost unbearable for an American to read, in the year 1971, after the other years. If we are ever to return to the soft quiet seasons—and we have not earned an easy passage—enough Americans must look past options, briefings, pros and cons, to see what is being done in their name, and to refuse to be accomplices. They must recognize, and force the Congress and President to act upon, the moral proposition that the US must stop killing people in Indochina: that neither the lives we have lost, nor the lives we have taken, give the US any right to determine by fire and airpower who shall govern or who shall die in Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos.

Verse extract

9/10